Public Meeting to Discuss HCP Conservation Strategies
November 15, 2005
DNRC Headquarters
2:00 to 5:00 p.m.
Missoula

Meeting notes transcribed here from posters in the meeting room:

Present were
DNRC: Mike O'Herron, Sarah Pierce, David Groeschl, Gary Frank, Jim Bower
USFWS: Tim Bodurtha, Lowell Whitney
BLM: Linda Cardenas
Pacific Rivers Council: Gary Carnefix

Public input recorded on posters:

Grizzly Bear Strategy:

- Consider coordination of BLM/DNRC road access management . There may be impacts to BLM, DNRC and the public from closures to reduce open road densities. Consider coordinating the timing of projects between the two agencies.

- Consider sharing of monitoring information so neighboring agencies can learn from DNRC's experience with the HCP. BLM can potentially share with DNRC, too.

- Encourage similar sharing with the public and independent scientists, and making data readily accessible on the Internet.

- Encourage access to data that are underlying and informing analysis and decision making.

Lynx Strategy

- No public input

Aquatics Strategies

- Is there a built-in conflict between the DNRC's trust management mandate and the requirements of the ESA that address incidental take permitting?

- To DNRC's credit, they are going beyond "…considering environmental factors.." in this process by defining management limits and mitigation parameters in the HCP. We want to ensure that the biological opinion considers the best available science.

- How will the HCP be affected by the recent designation of critical habitat for bull trout? Do state projects have to consider impacts to downstream, off-site, critical habitat?

- Clarify whether there are different levels of protection of core versus other bull trout habitat in the strategies.

- The question has to be asked and answered "What level of protection is necessary to ensure that the species' likelihood of survival and recovery in the wild is not appreciably reduced?" Rather than "What is the minimum change from current management practices that would be adequate?" It looks like the process did not start from what the species needed and how to provide it.

- Strongly recommend looking at INFISH for what the species needs to conserve them. INFISH standards are the default minimum that should be applied. If a less restrictive approach is taken, the burned of proof is on the agency to justify it scientifically. INFISH is the state of the art for what fish need.

- Is the precautionary principle applicable? If not, why not? Its called for by the ESA and this whole process. And example of the precautionary principle that you ARE using is assuming fish presence when data is lacking. There are other specific examples of where it should be applied, and it is not.

- Adaptive Management (AM) should start from a precautionary platform, then back down restrictions if they are more than adequate. For AM to be scientifically valid, the monitoring design has to detect changes that matter. The Monitoring and AM are vague and wide open; there are no set minimums on what would be monitored.

- Setting the baseline is important. Current conditions may already be degraded. It's not appropriate to se the baseline for sensitive species at degraded conditions.

- Other HCP's, which are not strong enough, are still stronger than this one. These standards fall short of standards in similar applications The burden is to justify it with objective science.

- Some standards are squishy, vague, open to interpretation.

- RMZ standards, weak to begin with, are further weakened by exceptions that are not justified scientifically.

- Caution you not to use science selectively. It's not necessarily a problem with this document. Objectively consider all relevant science.

- The Washington Forest and Fish HCP uses height at 160 years for site potential tree height.

- In the Washington Forest and Fish HCP, if a stream has a CMZ, RMZ starts at the outer edge. DNRC starts at the current edge of the stream channel.

- Roads are the biggest problem you have out there, especially the existing conditions. Dealing with it should be the top priority. Suggest you have "take" going on currently from bad roads.

- Should compensate new road building through decommissioning, upgrading existing roads. Should demonstrate that the benefits from mitigations compensate for new roads. Roads frequently intercept ground water that would have reached the stream.

- Should accelerate the schedule for dealing with road problems

- Page 2-12 mentions timber harvest in wetlands. Surprised and concerned timber harvest is happening in wetlands.

Transition Lands Strategy

- No public input

end